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Mahabad

Those who had an opportunity to meet Qazi Mohammad could not fail to be impressed with his personality, and easily understood how he had become a symbol for Kurdish nationalists everywhere. A short man of fifty, dressed in an old army overcoat, he had a lightly bearded, ascetic face, slightly yellowish in complexion from a stomach complaint. He neither smoked nor drank and ate very little. His voice was gentle and well-modulated, his gestures quiet but effective. Something of an internationalist, he was interested in all the peoples of the world and knew many languages, including Russian, a little English, and Esperanto. His desk was customarily littered with grammars and readers and literary works in foreign tongues.

He seemed to be a man of deep convictions, backed with a rare courage and self-sacrifice, but tempered with broad-mindedness and moderation. During the period in question, at least, his demands were moderate: Kurdish autonomy within the Iranian state. He professed to share the view of many Kurds that since they were members of the same Iranian racial family as the Persians proper, there was no reason why they could not form the same combination as did the ancient Medes and Persians. Qazi himself thought the Kurds were the descendants of the Medes, and liked to give his own etymology of Mahabad — "abode of the Medes."

Yet it would be impossible to deny that he and his followers also held pan-Kurdish aspirations and hoped to make Mahabad the center of Kurdish culture and the Kurdish nationalist movement, replacing Syria and Suleimania, its centers at the present time. Great efforts were being made to put Kurdish education on a sound footing. At first Kurdish teachers had to translate from Persian textbooks orally in the classroom, but shortly before the fall of the Kurdish Republic, textbooks in Kurdish had been printed for the primary grades. In addition to a newspaper and a political monthly periodical, both called *Kurdistan*, there were published two primarily literary magazines, *Havar* and *Hilal*.[10] All of these were printed on a press presented by the Red Army to

[10] A number of other Kurdish periodicals had been published during the Komala period, such as *Kelavizh* and notably *Nisktoman*, official organ of the party, which bore a picture of Saladin on the cover and circulated in Iraq as well as Iran.